

TCO



Foto: Berit Roald/Scanspix

THIS IS TCO

Photo: p1: Berit Roald/Scanspix; pp 4, 5, 12 and 13: Leif Zetterling
Production: TCO, avdelningen för kommunikation & opinion, (Communications and lobbying) 2010

Printed by: CM Gruppen, Stockholm, October 2010

ISBN: 91 7168 856-0

Item no: 12027

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INTRODUCTION

TCO, the confederation for professional employees, bring together many different groups of professionals including nurses, engineers, journalists, bank employees, teachers and police officers in 16 unions. Their members have in common that in general they hold qualified positions as a result of having completed higher education. The common interests and conditions of the members of the TCO unions form the basis for TCO's activities.

Sweden has one of the world's highest levels of union membership. Swedish public servants in both central and municipal government service, the defence forces and the police are also members of unions and have the right to negotiate and the right to strike. Sweden is unique in that the majority of salaried employees in the private sector are also members of unions. In actual fact, there are more salaried employees than wage earners in Sweden who are members of unions.



THE ISSUES THAT TCO PURSUES

Work and the work-life balance

It must be possible to combine working life with a private life that works. A work-life balance needs to be maintained even when tasks that demand a higher level of commitment and shouldering a greater degree of responsibility take up more of the employee's time and energy, and place bigger demands on him/her.

Women and men have equal rights to work and family. When the workload at home is not equitably shared, the risk of absenteeism due to illness increases. Both men and women should be able to combine work and family on equal terms, and still be able to maintain their own work-life balance. For this to be possible, a more equitable sharing of parenting and a more parent-friendly working life must be developed.

More people must have the energy to keep on working right up into their later years because there is a risk of a shortage of labour in Sweden in the future. Ethnic discrimination must be counteracted to allow



everybody to get work that matches their competence and capabilities. Working life must be developed in such a way that the knowledge and experience and knowledge of all people can be utilised to the full. The preclusions and exclusions that exist today are a waste of precious resources.

A functioning social security system and education are the mainstays for jobs

In modern-day working life, there are ever-increasing demands on people to be flexible and open to change. The climate change threat and the changes

TCO'S BASIC VALUES

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) is a confederation of Swedish unions covering a range of professional groups. TCO works for the social, union-related, economic and professional interests of the higher-educated and professionally employed. TCO is not affiliated with any political party.

- TCO strengthens and develops the right to bargain collectively
- TCO strengthens and develops the idea of unionism
- TCO represents its member unions in relation to the state authorities
- TCO represents its member unions internationally.

TCO's basic values pervade all our activities. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is fundamental to all union activities.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Everyone has the capacity to develop and contribute to the growth and development of society through their knowledge and experience, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Women and men are to have the same rights, obligations and opportunities within all areas of society.

Equality of opportunity between women and men is a theme

required to achieve climate-friendly, sustainable growth underline this. This means that people need to be prepared to learn new things, change job and possibly also move location. So that more people are able to handle the rapid pace of change in the labour market and for the Swedish economy to remain competitive in the long term, we must create real opportunities for continuing and further education and competence development throughout all of working life. This will only be achieved if people feel confident in and secure about these changes.

It is therefore important that our nation's social security

that runs through all of TCO's activities – with respect to both political lobbying and our choice of commissions of trust.

TCO is a democratic organisation that upholds a democratic society.

Democracy must be continuously defended and developed. Free democratic trade unions are central to democratic states and contribute to peace and justice both within and between countries.

Solidarity is the foundation for union work

The activities of unions are based on solidarity as an idea. Its point of departure is mutual support and assistance in difficult times. TCO upholds and develops solidarity both in society at large and within union organisations.

Political independence is essential

TCO is independent of the political parties in Sweden but this does not mean that TCO does not hold its own views on political issues. TCO pursues realpolitik/practical political issues for the purpose of promoting the interests of its member unions and their members. Its political independence is a strength which means that TCO can pursue issues with the same intensity irrespective of the political majority.

systems function well and are comprehensive. A period of unemployment between jobs should not need to lead to poverty. The same applies in the case of prolonged illness. In the latter case, the individual should also have the right to rehabilitation if so required. Parental insurance should provide the opportunity for people to have children without being forced to reduce their standard of living to any great extent.

Our social security systems must also cover the broad middle groups in society. TCO's goal is that everyone should have the right to 80% of their income should they become unemployed or ill, and when they take parental leave.

Education is central to the labour market today. Sweden competes with countries that are striving for a higher percentage of higher-educated people. To create more jobs with a high knowledge content and thereby lay the foundations for long-term sustainable growth, universities and institutions of higher education must be opened up to new groups. Anyone who wishes to should be able to study at university. Higher ambitions with respect to education also imply substantial investments in improving the quality of education.

Education is always worthwhile – in spite of the fact that there are professions that do not pay according to competence. We need to redress situations in which salaries are far too low within the well-educated, female-dominated occupational groups.

Strong unions and globalisation

For a long time, the unions in Sweden have worked well and cooperated with the employers. The foundation of this is our system, where collective agreements between the unions and the employers without the

involvement of the state have brought order and clarity to the labour market and workplaces. The rule of law that exists in Sweden for working life is flexible, which allows for the possibility of taking into consideration the particular conditions applicable in different industries. In the Swedish Model, the unions have been able to deliver fair salaries and decent working conditions.

A big challenge lies in this being possible in a time of ever more rapid globalisation as well. TCO wants to strengthen the Swedish Model with respect to how salaries and working conditions are regulated so that we are able to work against wage and salary dumping and the debasing of working conditions. This demands strong unions that can cooperate both nationally and internationally. TCO is an advocate for union rights and the Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to be respected in all countries.

The union is changing

The union is changing in pace with trends and developments in the labour market and the business environment. Through the TCO unions' initiative (www.FacketFörändras.nu) we are now working together to develop and promote the value of being part of a union primarily among young graduates, students and those new to working life. We also want to make it easier for young people to become actively involved in working for the union in the workplace.

Members of unions have the opportunity to influence the collective agreement and ultimately the conditions of the Swedish labour market. The more people in the union, the stronger it becomes. And the stronger the union, the better the collective agreement they will be able to negotiate.

TCO'S ORGANISATION

TCO's general decisions are made by the Congress which consists of representatives from the 16 member unions. The Congress convenes roughly every fourth year.

The Executive Committee, which is elected by the Congress, makes decisions concerning TCO's day-to-day operations. TCO's Central Office executes the decisions of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee consists of the Chairperson and 10 members. Since not all the unions are represented, at least four conferences of union presidents are held each year so that all the unions can participate in important discussions and debates. The conferences of union presidents are advisory bodies to the Executive Committee, but on certain issues they can make decisions in the place of the Congress between Congresses.

www.tco.se

TCO LABELLING

TCO works actively to improve people's work environments and for sustainable growth that takes climate change issues into consideration. TCO's enterprise TCO Development is our avenue for working concretely to improve the work environment and save the planet. TCO Development certifies and labels IT equipment and office furniture with quality and environment labels to make it easier for purchasers and users to choose office equipment of high-quality that is good for the users and also eco-friendly.

TCO labelling is an international standard and approximately half of all display units for computers manufactured in the world today are TCO Certified. The annual



global energy saving from the use of TCO Certified display units was estimated to be at least 25 TWh in 2006. This is the equivalent of the output of approximately 4 nuclear power reactors of normal size for a year.

www.tcodevelopment.se

COOPERATION WITH SACO AND LO

The boundaries between different groups of employees have become increasingly fluid at the same time as changes in society are placing greater demands on union organisations. Co-operation between TCO and the two other confederations of unions in Sweden – the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) – provide a better foundation for success in union work.

TCO is the central organisation that represents the greatest number of university graduates in Sweden. More than half of the TCO unions' members have completed higher education and this proportion is increasing. Many TCO unions cooperate with Saco associations in collective bargaining, for example.

TCO also cooperates with LO in many areas. An example is the LO-TCO Legal Service which can represent members of the TCO and LO unions in legal disputes with their employers.

Through the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Co-operation, TCO and LO pursue union-based development co-operation by supporting the creation and development of independent, democratic trade unions throughout the world: www.lotcobistand.org

TCO, LO and Saco have a joint office in Brussels for monitoring union issues in the EU:

www.brysselkontoret.com



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Union organisations must be involved with and influence important decisions that affect our members' everyday lives wherever these decisions are made. Subsequent to Sweden's membership of the EU, many decisions previously made in Sweden are now made at the EU level.

TCO works internationally – both in the global arena and within the EU – with largely the same issues as it does nationally: the economy, employment, sustainable growth, equal opportunity, working conditions and human rights.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is the dominant representative of organised employees in Europe. ETUC represents 59 million members from over 60 nationally based confederations of unions and professional associations, including TCO:

www.etuc.org

TCO was part of the formation of the Council of Nordic Trade Unions (NFS) which represents around 15 nationally based confederations of unions and professional associations in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Greenland.

www.nfs.net



In 1949, TCO was involved in the formation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) which now comprises the backbone of the International Trade Union Confederation, which was formed in 2006.

www.ituc-csi.org



TCO was also involved in the formation of TUAC, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

www.tuac.org

BACKGROUND

Sweden has relatively weak labour market legislation: instead the parties to the labour market have an important responsibility for the conditions in the labour market through the signing of collective agreements. Sweden is also unique in that even its professional employees have the right to form unions.

A fundamental reason for the high degree of union organisation in Sweden among the professionally employed is that all employees in the Swedish labour market gained the right to collective bargaining early on. Even those who are professionally employed in the private sector were guaranteed the right to negotiate and the right to strike early in the history of unionism in Sweden.

After a long period of fierce conflict in the Swedish labour market, LO and the Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF) agreed on what is called the Saltsjöbaden Agreement in 1938. This agreement was to leave a lasting impression on the relationship between the parties to the labour market in Sweden with a But what this agreement is best known for is not stated overtly in the actual text of the agreement; namely that the state does not involve itself in contract negotiations but allows the parties to the labour market to agree among themselves in voluntary collective agreements.

In 1931, the National Swedish Union of Bank Employees initiated the formation of the first central organisation for professional employees in the private sector in the Confederation of employees (DACO – De Anställdas Centralorganisation). One of the primary reasons behind the formation of DACO was that the industry organisations of the time lacked

the legal right to sign collective agreements. It was not until 1965 that professional employees in the public sector were granted the right to sign collective agreements through what was called the collective bargaining reform. As a result, even public sector employees achieved full union rights.

In 1937, the Unions for Public Sector Professional Employees formed the central organisation of professional employees (Tco) which is today referred to as “the old Tco”. The biggest member groups within Tco were preschool teachers, who comprised almost half of the union organisation’s members. In 1944, DACO and Tco merged to become the current TCO. At the end of 1944, TCO had 180,000 members. Today TCO has close to 1.2 million members.



TCO

TCO is a confederation of 16 affiliated unions with a combined total of 1.2 million members. Of these, 60,000 are student members of one of the affiliated unions.

A wide variety of professions are represented among the members of the TCO affiliated unions, ranging from business administrators, solicitors and lawyers, graduate engineers and political scientists to social workers, teachers, nurses, police and actors and actresses. The TCO unions organise more graduates of higher education in Sweden than any other confederation of unions.

The TCO unions are found in all spheres of the labour market including the private and the public sectors, and the service and manufacturing industries. As a result of their many years in the field, these unions are veritable storehouses of knowledge and experience in the rules of play between employees and employers.

Find out more by visiting www.tco.se





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FTF – facket för försäkring och finans



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